

**Region Three Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718
August 31, 2009**

**Decision Notice for
Black Sandy State Park
Improvement Project
Draft Environmental Assessment**

PROPOSED ACTION

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks proposes to add electrical pedestals and electrical infrastructure to 29 of the 33 campsites at Black Sandy State Park and to pave the interior road system including the camp spurs.

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on June 25, 2009.

Public comment on the proposed project was taken through July 27, 2009. The EA was mailed to 62 individuals and groups, a statewide press release was sent to the print and broadcast media, legal notices were printed in the *Helena Independent Record*, and the Draft EA was posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks received seven written comments and four verbal comments regarding the proposed action. Four comments were received that support the proposed action of adding electric service to the campsites. Three comments were received that oppose the proposed action of adding electric service to the campsites. Four verbal comments were received on site from visitors who support paving the interior roadway but do not support paving the camp spurs.

The verbal comments were collected at Black Sandy State Park by FWP staff. Park visitors were informed of the project and asked what they thought of it. Many people thought the paving was a good idea to reduce dust, but they did not like the idea of paved camp spurs. People complained that the site would be too hot in the direct sun and they didn't like the idea of camping on asphalt. Park visitors were supportive of having electric available to reduce the use of generators.

Comments supportive of the proposed action

Comment #1

YES, yes yes, I am in favor of putting in electricity in our state parks. Electricity is less polluting, quieter, and safer than using generators. Our state parks should be for all citizens, not just those who don't want electricity. I don't see it as being in competition with private campgrounds but as an in-between accommodation, with commercial campgrounds also offering on site water and sewer.

I have traveled throughout the western states and our parks are pitiful next to other states. Twenty years ago Oregon state parks offered electricity and I noticed the "tenters" enjoying it too, using it for an electric shaver or blow dryer or a frying pan or lighting. For several years a choice has been made as to whether or not to pay a \$4 yearly fee when paying vehicle taxes. I have chosen to pay the fee in the hopes that our state parks would be upgraded. I am totally in favor of your proposal and hope that you will begin with the parks currently under consideration and expand to include more. I would very much like to see our new Lincoln Ranch State Park become one of the electrified choices.

FWP Response: So noted

Comment: #2

"a quite campground"? ha! Unless it's off road, there is no such thing! This guy has not been 'camping'. There is no camping experience worse than being next to a generator, usually a very loud one because they're the cheapest, that the camper deems necessary to run air conditioners, tv for the kids, medical oxygen generators or even wheelchair lifts. We've been there: more than once and that's a shame for state parks. An adamant YES for electricity and paving and a fee would be a privilege!

FWP Response: So noted

Comment #3

Dear Fish Wildlife & Parks,

After reading the EA on this project, I support Alternate B. Without a doubt the paving of this Park will be a great improvement. As for the adding of the electrical pedestals, all anyone would have to do is spend a day next to a RV running a generator and they would know why those should be added.

FWP Response: So noted

Comment #4

I want to comment regarding the proposed electrical pedestals at Lewis & Clark SP and Black Sandy. Electric sites at Mt. State Parks is WAY past due. Please don't limit it to just these two parks, after all this is the 21st century. To expand just a little, my husband and I are well into our 70's and are avid motor-home campers. My husband has health issues which requires the use of electrically operated medical equipment several times a day. We love the State Park setting but unfortunately we have been unable to enjoy them due to the lack of electrical availability. Please,

please don't let the private campground owners again deter you from adding this amenity to our State Parks. I'm looking forward to electrical availability at our State Parks. Thanks!

FWP Response: So noted

Comments opposed to the proposed action

Comment #5

I am writing concerning the proposed improvements to Black Sandy Campground. I live at Hauser Dam and am very concerned about any more "improvements" being made to either campground out here. Since White Sandy opened the traffic on the road has at least tripled as well as the beer and whiskey cans and bottles. I have been nearly hit so many times I can't count them anymore. The road is too narrow to accommodate bigger rigs that will be encouraged to come out this way. It is already dangerous for the ones that are driving this way as it is. People don't drive the speed limit, they don't stay on their side of the road, and there is so much evidence of alcohol and vehicles that it is scary for those of us who HAVE to drive the road everyday. I realize some people need all of their fancy electrical what-nots but at the cost of human life? I have seen 3 wrecks on the road in the last few months and know that it will only get worse. There are plenty of campgrounds on better roads that have electricity and maybe we should save some camp spots for people who like tents and no lights and electricity. After all that is what camping is really about, not taking your 24 foot huge rig down a gravel road so you can do "urban camping". Thanks for your time and consideration. I vote no, but since this is government and about making money I highly doubt that my opinion will matter in the least.

FWP Response:

The addition of electric to the campsites at Black Sandy State Park will not increase traffic on the Hauser Dam Road. Black Sandy is usually filled to capacity on the summer weekends so additional use is not anticipated. 4 tent camping sites will remain un-electrified to provide a range of overnight accommodations to meet the diverse needs of the recreating public.

Comment #6

I am writing to oppose any proposal to add electrical outlets for campers at the MT Black Sandy Campground.

There are plenty of places that 'campers' who drive around in RVs and want electricity to run their air-conditioners and Direct TVs and strings of holiday lights can spend the night.

Camping is supposed to be about getting back to nature. Being surrounded by people who can't bear to be away from every form of creature comfort destroys this concept, and they are not to be encouraged in our state parks. I camp in state parks and avoid private RV parks specifically for this reason. People in RVs may think that what they're doing is camping, but it's not, and people with my perspective rely on state parks without electrical service to avoid all the negatives RVs bring with.

This is also a terrible idea from an economic standpoint. Since there's no mention of metering the use of electricity, the citizens of MT will wind up essentially subsidizing its use. How ironic that

would be, paying RV users to come to natural settings so they can destroy the atmosphere of natural peace and quiet.

Moreover, providing this subsidized electricity will impact private businesses that are designed to serve this segment of 'campers' and put the state government in direct competition with them. That's not something our government should be doing.

This was a terrible idea when it was first proposed over a year ago and it remains a terrible idea now. Please do not provide electrical hookups in this park.

FWP Response:

Approximately 70% of Black Sandy State Park camping visitation is from people using campers and RV's, by adding electric at the campsites noise and fumes from generators will be eliminated. FWP plans to charge \$5.00 per night for the use of electric, so the fee should cover the expense of providing the electric. By using electric power instead of gas operated generators, overall fuel consumption will be reduced and the park will be a cleaner, quieter atmosphere.

Comment #7

Public comment to FWP

I am opposed to the electrification and paving of any public campground. The last thing I want to see, whether in a tent or RV is blacktop pavement in front of my campsite. I don't care what campground I go to in Montana I especially don't want to see outdoor lights. Your turning real campgrounds into a commercial operation. You people (FWP) have done an excellent job creating beautiful campgrounds for a reasonable price. There are much more important things we could be spending \$760,000.00 on. I'm also in big disagreement with the extremely short comment period. The person responsible for this should be fired from his job. Maybe there needs to be a law against anything less than 3 weeks. Your right, during the peak of the summer when allot of people are on vacation or are in the hectic process of getting ready for their summer vacation what better time and way to ram this thru. I'll call my legislator.

FWP Response:

Camping is not about "roughing it" to many visitors who may want to watch a weather report or a Disney movie with their grandkids on a rainy day. Electrical services at sites will make experiences and memories better. The comment period for the Black Sandy State Park Improvement project was 32 days (June 25 through July 27, 2009).

DECISION

Based on the analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and applicable laws, regulations, and policies, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

It is my decision to proceed with the project as proposed, namely to add electrical pedestals and electrical infrastructure to 29 of the 33 campsites at Black Sandy State Park and to pave the interior road system including the camp spurs. The paving of camp spurs at Black Sandy State Park will provide consistency throughout the Montana State Park system. Montana State Parks

has recently paved spurs at Tongue River Reservoir State Park, West Shore State Park (Flathead Lake), and Placid Lake State Park. Additionally plans are underway to pave spurs at Salmon Lake State Park and Lake Mary Ronan State Park.

APPEAL

This project is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the FWP Director (Mr. Joe Maurier, Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701) in writing and postmarked within 30 days of the date on this decision notice. The appeal must specifically describe the basis for the appeal, explain how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and lay out how FWP may address the concerns in the appeal. If you have questions regarding this decision notice, please contact Gerald Walker, Regional Parks Manager at 406-994-3552.

Gerald Walker
Regional Parks Manager
